

Morphophonological alternations in Thok Reel verb inflection

Tatiana Reid
 MScR Linguistics
tatiana@ling.ed.ac.uk
 Nilotic Prosody Project,
 LEL,
 The University of Edinburgh

Thok Reel is a hitherto undescribed Western Nilotic language of Dinka-Nuer subgroup spoken in Southern Sudan (Ethnologue ISO 639-3: atu). I will present field data on morphophonological alternations in Thok Reel verb inflection. In Thok Reel words are predominantly monosyllabic. A significant part of Thok Reel morphology is expressed by alternations of phonological parameters on monosyllabic stems. These *stem-internal operations* involve alternations in *vowel length* (1a, d), *vowel quality* (1b), *voice quality* (1c), *tone* (1b) and *stem-final consonant* (1d).

(1) *Thok Reel examples:*

- | | | |
|--|---|---|
| a. short vowel (V)
è- rwám -kò
D-finish\AP-1PL
<i>We are finishing</i> | ~ | mid-length vowel (VV)
è- rwám -è
D-finish\AP-1SG
<i>I am finishing</i> |
|
mid-length vowel (VV)
è- ṛáac -kò
D-milk\AP-1PL
<i>We are milking</i> | ~ | long vowel (VVV)
è- ṛáaac -è
D-milk\AP-1SG
<i>I am milking</i> |
|
b. stem vowel /a/, High tone
è- ṛác rwâc
D-know\1SG word\PL
<i>I know words</i> | ~ | stem vowel /ɛ/, Low tone
è- ṛèc rwâc
D-know\3SG word\PL
<i>He/she knows words</i> |

- | | | | |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| c. | modal voice | ~ | breathy voice (V) |
| | è-kéer Mádít
D-wake.up\1SG Madit
<i>I am waking Madit up</i> | | è-kéer Mádít
D-wake.up\3SG Madit
<i>He/she is waking Madit up</i> |
| d. | stem-final /w/, mid-length vowel | ~ | stem-final /k/, short vowel |
| | è-náaw dīt
D-kill\1SG bird\SG
<i>I am killing the bird</i> | | kèε-nák dīt
3PL\D-kill bird\SG
<i>They are killing the bird</i> |

I will discuss stem-internal operations involved in subject agreement marking. The discussion will be based on two types of verbs – 1) semantically and syntactically transitive verbs - verbs that take two obligatory arguments (2a); and 2) semantically transitive but syntactically intransitive verbs, or *antipassive* verbs – a verbal derivation which signals that patient participant of a clause is syntactically optional (2b).

- (2)
- | a. | transitive | b. | antipassive |
|----|---|----|--|
| | è-náaw dît
D-kill\1SG bird\SG
<i>I am killing the bird</i> | | è-nàw-ĕ
D-kill\AP-1SG
<i>I am killing</i> |
| | è-nĕɛw dît
D-kill\3SG bird\SG
<i>He/she is killing the bird</i> | | è-nĕw
D-kill\AP\3SG
<i>He/she is killing</i> |

Abbreviations

AP	antipassive	PL	plural
D	declarative particle	1-3	first, second, third person
SG	singular		

References

Ethnologue report for Thok Reel: [online at http://www.ethnologue.com/show_language.asp?code=atu]